



CALL FOR PAPERS WCP Virtual International Conference on International Trade and Investment

Special Conference Theme

‘Digital Trade in Africa: The Way Forward’

14–15 November 2023

Organised by the WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) @ The University of Mauritius (Mauritius)

in collaboration with

the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA),



the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)



and

WTO Chairs at the

North-West University (South Africa), University of Tunis (Tunisia), University of Nairobi (Kenya), University of Rwanda (Rwanda), TRAPCA (Tanzania) and Cairo University (Egypt)

Background

Undeniably, international trade today is powered by technology. We live in an era of increasing digitalisation, digitally enabled trade and digital trade, with the Covid-19 pandemic having given strong impetus to digital trade in recent years. It is widely acknowledged that digitalisation reduces barriers to entry in the international trade arena, boosts communication amongst traders and nations, creates more economic opportunities, gives greater visibility to small enterprises, and expands access to many new products and services. The World Bank estimates that the digital economy accounts for more than 15% of global GDP and has grown 2.5 times faster over the past 10 years than the GDP of the physical world.

However, the figures for Africa have prompted fears that the pronounced digital divide on the continent will hinder Africa’s digitalisation efforts and outcomes. A number of African initiatives have demonstrated that the continent has considerable potential to explore and benefit from digital trade. Nevertheless, the effective digitalisation of the continent demands new ways of thinking about trade, data governance, investment, competition, taxation, trade in ICT products and services, intellectual property, industrial policy, privacy, cyber security, labour market dynamics, skills and immigration. This calls for an in-depth and timely debate on the way forward for digital trade in Africa.

International Conference on International Trade and Investment (virtual)

The WTO Chairs in the African region are organising a virtual International Conference on International Trade and Investment, with the special theme of ‘**Digital Trade in Africa: The Way Forward**’. The conference aims to provide a forum not only for academics to focus on issues related to African and other developing countries but also for policymakers from the region to discuss and deliberate on the implications, benefits, challenges and opportunities of digital trade in Africa.

The conference organisers are calling for conceptual or empirically based research papers or country-specific case studies that address the conference theme ('Digital Trade in Africa: The Way Forward') or other trade-related issues in Africa. Preference will be given to papers or case studies focusing specifically on the conference theme, although papers covering other aspects of international trade, development and investment can also be submitted. Presenters can deliver either completed research papers or work in progress, and their paper submissions and presentations must address both the theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

Presentations will be conducted in parallel tracks and will be refereed to enable researchers to receive constructive feedback on their work. In addition, the organisers hope to hold a round table discussion that will bring academics and policymakers together to focus on specific aspects of the conference theme.

Topics that could be considered include, *but are not limited to*, the following:

- *The challenges and opportunities of digital trade in Africa*
- *Digital trade and the transfer of knowledge, technology and innovation*
- *Digital trade and the Covid-19 pandemic*
- *Digital trade: The potential for increased trade in goods and services*
- *Legal and normative implications of digital trade*
- *Boosting intra-African trade through digital trade*
- *Digital trade and the SDGs*
- *Competition and intellectual property rights in digital trade*
- *Data governance and digital trade*
- *Digital trade: Opportunities and challenges for women, youth and MSMEs*
- *Cybersecurity issues in digital trade*
- *Digital trade and the private sector*
- *The digital divide in Africa*
- *Consumer protection and digital trade*
- *Digital trade and LDCs*
- *Digital trade and gender*
- *Digitalisation and GVC integration*
- *Digital trade infrastructure*
- *E-commerce restrictive measures*
- *E-commerce readiness*
- *Digital trade facilitation*
- *Artificial intelligence and digital trade*
- *RTAs and digital trade*
- *Payment-related issues*

Guidelines for authors/presenters

The organising committee invites the submission of abstracts (max. 300 words) or full papers (max. 5000 words) from researchers and practitioners in the fields of international trade, development, finance and investment. All abstracts should be formatted to facilitate the review process. On a separate cover page, the following information should appear:

- name, affiliation and address (including email address for general correspondence) of each author and co-author, and
- a brief personal profile (max. 100 words) of each presenter.

By submitting an abstract, at least one author undertakes to attend the virtual international conference if the final paper is accepted. In addition, one author should not have more than two submissions, either as a single author or as a co-author.

All submissions should be forwarded via email (as a word.doc attachment) to wcpmauritiu2023@uom.ac.mu with the subject line 'WCP International Conference on International Trade and Investment 2023'. Researchers are encouraged to register for the conference upon acceptance of their abstract. Authors of accepted abstracts will need to submit their completed paper by 15 October 2023 for inclusion in the conference e-proceedings, subject to a blind review.

Important dates and deadlines

Deadline for abstracts (max. 300 words) or full papers (max. 5000 words):	2 September 2023
Notification of outcome of review process/acceptance:	1 October 2023
Deadline for inclusion of revised abstracts/final papers in the proceedings:	15 October 2023
Deadline for conference registration:	1 November 2023
Conference dates:	14-15 November 2023

Co-Chairs

Prof Boopen Seetanah (University of Mauritius), Dr Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur (University of Mauritius), Mrs Varsha Mooneeram-Chadee (University of Mauritius) and Prof Wilma Villiers (North-West University)

Organising Committee

Prof Leila Baghdadi (University of Tunis); Prof Tabitha W. Kiriti-Nganga (University of Nairobi); Dr Chekwoti (TRAPCA); Prof Chahir Zaki (Cairo University) and Dr Jonas Barayandema (Uni. of Rwanda).

Scientific Committee

Prof Jaime De Melo (Uni. of Geneva); Prof Oliver Morrissey (Uni. of Nottingham); Prof Nicholas Ngepah (Uni. of Johannesburg); Prof Pramila Krishnan (University of Oxford); Prof Stephan Darcon (University of Oxford); Prof R Vinesh Sannasse (SADC); Dr Richard Newfarmer (International Growth Centre/WCP); Dr Stephen Karingi (UNECA); Dr Nassim Oulmane (UNECA); Ms Bineswaree Bolaky (UNECA); Dr Mustapha S Jallab (WTO); Dr Werner Zdouc (WTO); Dr Riza Noer Arfani (Universitas Gadjah Mada); Prof Taleb Awad-Warrad (University of Jordan); Dr Sheereen Fauzel (University of Mauritius); Dr Maarten Smeets (St Petersburg State University/SUIBE), Prof Kesseven Padachi (Uni. of Technology, Mauritius), Dr Viraiyen Teeroovengadam (University of Mauritius), Ms Chibole Wakoli (WTO), Dr Adelia Jansen van Rensburg (North-West University) and Ms Ali Parry (North-West University).

About the WTO Chairs Programme

(<https://wtochairs.org/>)

The WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) seeks to enhance knowledge and understanding of the trading system amongst academics, citizens and policymakers in developing countries by stimulating teaching, research and public debate on international trade and trade cooperation at the level of tertiary education and research institutions. The WTO provides financial support for a period of four years to academic institutions, and facilitates continuous interaction between institutions, ministries, civil society, the private sector, students and academics. It also supports academic institutions and associated individual scholars from developing countries in the following areas: course preparation, teaching, research and information dissemination.

The ultimate goal of the WCP is to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of universities from developing countries to support governments in the formulation of sound trade policies. One of the main objectives of the WCP is to promote research that builds specialised knowledge while also reinforcing the policy relevance of existing research.